

Claims

1. In a distributed system having a publishing master and a client system, a method comprising:

5 providing at the publishing master an index of available packages for loading;

accessing the index on behalf of the client system to identify at least one selected package for loading at the client system; and

loading the selected package at the client system.

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2. The method of claim 1 wherein the selected package is loaded without registration of the client system with the publishing master.

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3. The method of claim 1 wherein the publishing master is unaware of the loading of the selected package at the client system.

4. The method of claim 1 wherein the selected package includes a patch for a computer program.

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5. The method of claim 1 further comprising the step of storing the selected package at a repository that is separate from the publishing master so that clients may access and load the selected package.

6. The method of claim 1 wherein the selected package includes a document.

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7. The method of claim 1 wherein the selected package includes at least one hypertext markup language (HTML) file.

8. The method of claim 1 wherein the publishing master is a web server.

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9. In a distributed system having a server and a client, a method comprising:
storing at the server information identifying packages that may be installed at the client;

storing at the client data that identifies packages to which the client subscribes; and

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using the information identifying packages that may be installed at the client and the data that identifies packages to which the client subscribes to determine which of the packages are to be installed at the client.

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10. The method of claim 9 further comprising installing the determined packages at the client.

5 11. The method of claim 9 further comprising providing data regarding what packages have already been installed at the client and using the data regarding what packages have already been installed in determining which of the packages are to be installed at the client.

10 12. The method of claim 9 wherein the information identifying packages that may be installed at the client includes information identifying names and version of the packages.

15 13. The method of claim 9 wherein the determining of which the packages to install at the client comprises generating a list of packages that may be installed at the client to which the client wants to subscribe and which have not already been installed at the client.

20 14. In a computer network having a server and a client, a method comprising the computer-implemented steps of:

(a) providing at the server data regarding what packages are available for installation;

(b) providing at the client an itemization of packages to which the client subscribes; and

25 (c) with the client, repeating multiple times the following steps:

(i) accessing the data regarding what packages are available and accessing the itemization of packages to which the client subscribes to determine what selected packages to install; and

(ii) installing selected packages at the client.

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15. The method of claim 14 wherein steps (c)(i) and (c)(ii) are repeated at periodic intervals.

35 16. The method of claim 14 wherein steps (c)(i) and (c)(ii) are repeated upon demand by a user.

17. In a distributed system having a publishing master, at least one repository for holding packages and multiple client computer systems, a method comprising:

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- providing a package index at the publishing master, wherein the package index identifies names and versions of packages stored on the repository;
- 5 providing a subscription list at each client system, wherein each subscription list identifies the packages to which the client system subscribes; and
- for each client system, at periodic intervals:
- 10 (i) identifying selected packages to be loaded by referencing the package index and the subscription list; and
- (ii) loading the selected packages at the client system
18. The method of claim 17 wherein at least one of the packages that is loaded includes at least one patch.
19. The method of claim 18 wherein at least one of the packages that is loaded includes multiple patches.
20. A distributed system, comprising:
- 25 a publishing master holding an index of packages that are available for installation;
- a repository for storing the packages that are available for installation; and
- 30 a client computer system for identifying selected packages among the packages indexed by the index of packages, obtaining the selected packages from the repository and installing the selected packages at the client computer system.
21. ~~The distributed computer system of claim 20 wherein the client computer system maintains a subscription list of packages to which the client computer system subscribes.~~
- 30 22. ~~The distributed computer system of claim 20 further comprising an additional repository for storing at least a portion of the packages that are available for installation.~~
- 35 23. ~~The distributed computer system of claim 20 further comprising an additional client computer system for identifying a subset of the packages indexed by the index of packages, obtaining the subset of packages from repository and installing the subset of packages at the additional client computer system.~~

24. In a distributed system having a publishing master, packages available for installation and an index of the packages available for installation which is stored at the publishing master, a client computer system, comprising:
- means for accessing the index on behalf of the client system to identify at least one selected package for installation at the client system; and
- means for installing the selected package at the client system.
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25. The client computer system of claim 24 wherein the selected package is installed without registration for the client system with the publishing master.
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26. The client computer system of claim 24 wherein the publishing master is unaware of the installing of the selected package at the client system.
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27. The client computer system of claim 24 wherein the selected package includes a patch for a computer program.
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28. The client computer system of claim 24 wherein the selected package includes a document.
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29. The client computer system of claim 24 wherein the selected package includes at least one hypertext markup language (HTML) file.
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30. In a distributed system having repositories for storing packages, a method comprising:
- providing a selected package or multiple repositories;
- determining respective response times for the repositories on which the selected package is provided; and
- retrieving the selected package from the repository that has the shortest response time.
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31. The method of claim 30 wherein the determining of respective response times comprises sending a test communication to the repositories on which the selected package is provided and measuring response times to the test communication.
32. The method of claim 30 wherein a client system that wishes to retrieve the selected package performs the determining and the retrieving.

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33. The method of claim 30 wherein the selected package contains computer instructions.
34. The method of claim 30 wherein the determining of response times is done when 5 the selected package is to be retrieved.
35. In a distributed system having a publishing master holding a package index of packages, and a client system holding a subscription list that identifies packages to which the client system subscribes, a computer-readable medium holding computer- 10 executable instructions for performing a method, comprising:
identifying selected packages to be loaded at the client system by referencing the package index and the subscription list; and
loading the selected packages at the client system.
- 15 36. The computer-readable medium of claim 35 wherein at least one of the packages loaded at the client system includes at least one patch.
37. In a distributed system having a publishing master holding a package index of packages, and a client system holding a subscription list that identifies packages to 20 which the client system subscribes, a transmission medium for transmitting signals for performing a method, comprising:
identifying selected packages to be loaded at the client system by referencing the package index and the subscription list; and
loading the selected packages at the client system.
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38. In a distributed system having a publishing master with an index of packages available for installation and a client system, a method performed by the client system comprising:
requesting at least a portion of the index from the publishing master;
receiving at least a portion of the index from the publishing master in response to the request;
processing the received portion of the index to identify a selected package to install; and
obtaining a copy of the selected package.
- 35 39. The method of claim 38 further comprising the step of installing the package at the client system.

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40. The method of claim 38 wherein the selected package is obtained without registration of the client system with the publishing master.
- 5 41. The method of claim 38 wherein the selected package contains a patch.
42. The method of claim 38 wherein the selected package contains a document.
- 10 43. In a distributed system having a publishing master having an index of packages available for installation and a client system, a computer-readable medium holding computer-executable instructions for performing a method performed by the client system comprising:
- requesting at least a portion of the index from the publishing master;
- receiving at least a portion of the index from the publishing master in response to the request;
- processing the received portion of the index to identify a selected package to install; and
- obtaining a copy of the selected package.
- 20 44. The storage medium of claim 43 wherein the selected package is obtained without registration of the client system with the publishing master.
45. The storage medium of claim 43 wherein the selected package contains a patch.
- 25 46. The storage medium of claim 41 wherein the selected package contains a document.
47. In a distributed system having storage holding packages that are available for downloading and a client, a method performed by the client, comprising:
- 30 obtaining data that identifies packages that are available for downloading;
- identifying packages to which the client subscribes;
- identifying packages that are already downloaded to the client;
- downloading from the storage selected packages at the client, wherein the selected packages are those which are identified for installation, identified as packages to which the client subscribes and identified as not yet being downloaded to the client.

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48. The method of claim 47 wherein at least one of the packages that is downloaded contains a patch.

49. The method of claim 47 wherein at least one of the packages that is downloaded
5 contains a hypertext document.

50. In a distributed system having storage holding packages that are available for downloading and a client, a computer-readable medium containing computer-executable instructions for performing a method performed by the client, comprising:

10 obtaining data that identifies packages that are available for downloading;
identifying packages to which the client subscribes;
identifying packages that are already downloaded to the client;
downloading from the storage selected packages at the client, wherein the selected packages are those which are identified for installation, identified as
15 packages to which the client subscribes and identified as not yet being downloaded to the client.

51. The storage medium of claim 50 wherein at least one of the packages that is downloaded contains a patch.

20 52. The storage medium of claim 50 wherein at least one of the packages that is downloaded contains a hypertext document.

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